CT Funeral Directors Association, Inc.

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Written Testimony of Nicole I. Granados, CFSP, CPC, Legislative Chair Connecticut Funeral Directors Association, Inc.

Proposed Bill No. 6678, An Act Concerning Revisions to Department of Public Health Licensing Statutes

Date: March 16, 2009 State of Connecticut - General Assembly – Public Health Committee

Good day, Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Nicole Granados and I have been a licensed funeral director and embalmer with practical experience for 14 years. As Legislative Chair, I respectfully submit this testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Funeral Directors Association (CFDA) which represents nearly 70-percent of the funeral homes in Connecticut.

With the matter of House Bill 6678, the Connecticut Funeral Directors Association <u>supports</u> this proposed bill with the sole exception of <u>Sec. 21</u>. <u>Subsection (2) lines 761-770 (page 25)</u>. This subsection would require the unnecessary embalming of a deceased body whose death was not due to a reportable disease and will not reach its final disposition or destination within 48 hours from the time of death. We respectfully recommend that these lines be **deleted** for the following reasons:

- 1. Most bodies do NOT reach their final disposition or destination within 48 hours from the time of death. This alone would trigger the embalming requirement for most families, including ALL who select cremation. By existing statute, cremation cannot take place within 48 hours from the time of death.
- 2. This subsection is not consistent with existing statute (Chapter 368a Dept. of Public Health Sec. 19a-91 Sec.(c) which states that the funeral director/embalmer shall prepare a body whose death resulted from a reportable disease, such as anthrax, smallpox or plague, by having such body washed, embalmed or wrapped as soon as practicable. To "wrap" is to place the body in a burial or cremation pouch made of not less than 4 millimeters of plastic. Wrapping provides for public health safety, is non-invasive and less costly for the families. If wrapping is sufficient for a body of a reportable disease to protect public health then this standard should be consistent with the body of a non-reportable disease.
- 3. Embalming is typically required by a funeral home for viewing purposes. Establishing a 48 hour rule will FORCE families, who do not choose viewing, to pay for embalming. When an unembalmed body is moved after 48 hours, for disposition or funeral services in a chapel, function room or church that is not climate controlled, the embalming requirement would inadvertently be triggered. Furthermore, a 48 hour rule is irrelevant as a body does not suddenly become a public health threat only upon the 48th hour. Funeral directors concern themselves with public health and use universal precautions for all bodies regardless of the time that elapsed after death. In the unlikely event that a family is unable to reach a disposition decision in a timely manner the funeral director may charge a "sheltering of remains" fee per day. The funeral director can also explain and enforce a practical time-frame when the results of embalming for viewing purposes, would be hindered due to decomposition.
- 4. This subsection will impose a "fiscal impact" to families that will place unnecessary financial burdens on families during a difficult time and economic climate. As stated earlier, families would be forced to pay embalming fees, regardless of their personal wishes/selections. Families who pre-pay their funeral selections will also be affected as the timing and date of death, the availability of the certifying practitioner and the business hours of the registrar, cemetery and/or crematory that are necessary to carry out final disposition will be an uncertainty ahead of time. All deaths occurring on a Friday or early Saturday would require embalming.
- 5. During a pandemic or mass fatality event, it would be impossible to embalm all deceased human remains. Climate controlled rooms will be limited and perhaps non-existent if temporary storage sites are utilized.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I welcome any questions or concerns that you may have.